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Department of Transitional Assistance

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Online Guide Transmittal 2024-61
November 1, 2024

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff

From:  Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Local Implementation and Special Populations

Re: TAFDC and EAEDC: Vendor Payments

Overview

Protective payments are made to vendors on behalf of a client in receipt of TAFDC or EAEDC. To ensure the accuracy and timeliness of vendor payments, the Department will now include the client's account number with the vendor for certain types of protective payments such as utilities. Vendor payment checks will display the client's account number when the service type is electricity, gas, heat, or mortgage. BEACON enhancements include a mandatory field for the client's service account number on the vendor payments page. The BEACON enhancement was deployed on August 16, 2024.

Purpose

The purpose of this Online Guide Transmittal is to advise staff of:

- the new mandatory account number field in BEACON for certain vendor types,
 - client's account number on the vendor payment check, and
 - updates to Online Guide pages.
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**Revised Online
Guide Pages**

Topic: Cross Programs
Book: SSPS Payments
Chapter: SSPS Benefits Procedures
Sub-Chapter: Vendor Payments – Cash
Page: Vendor Payments Introduction

Topic: Cross Programs
Book: SSPS Payments
Chapter: SSPS Benefits Procedures
Sub-Chapter: Vendor Payments – Cash
Page: Vendor Payments Page – Protective Payments

Questions

If you have any policy or procedural questions, after conferring with the appropriate TAO personnel, please have your Systems Information Specialists or TAO management email them to [DTA.Procedural Issues](#).

Systems issues should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.

Vendor Payments Introduction

Vendor payments, also referred to as protective payments, are payments that can be made by the Department directly to a third-party (vendor) on behalf of a client in receipt of cash assistance. Vendor payments are deducted from the client's cash grant on the Vendor Payments page in the Case Maintenance workflow in the Assessed Person Income and Expenses workflow.

Vendor payments can be protective payments to help the client manage their household expenses. Payments can be made monthly for a client's rent, mortgage, heat, electricity and gas. Other expense types on the Vendor Payments page relative to Young Parent Living Program (YPLP) fees are not currently being used.

Important	There is a hard edit to prevent the creation of an SSPS invoice if the protective payment deduction is not effective for the first cyclical date of the month. Payment is made to the vendor through the Special Services Payment System (SSPS) invoice process. A single SSPS invoice is used to establish initial vendor payments and authorize ongoing payments. The SSPS invoice authorizes payment for the first month. Thereafter, payments must be released each month by a you or your supervisor.
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Payment is made to the vendor through the SSPS invoice process. After the monthly release, the Pending Invoices view will display all of the protective payments subject to release for the next month. You must check the Pending Invoices view daily, at a minimum the last two full weeks of the month through the Friday of release, which is on or before the first Wednesday of the next month. This event is known as the monthly payroll batch job.

On this view, you will select each invoice for any client subject to protective payments for a monthly release. You may release the protective payment as soon as it becomes visible on the Pending Invoices view. See [Processing Vendor Payment](#).

Vendor Payments for Housing

When a vendor payment is made for rental housing, you must obtain written certification from the City, the Town Board of Health, or, if in Boston, the Inspectional Services Department, Housing Division, stating that the housing meets the minimum standards for health and safety established by that agency. If the housing does not meet the health and safety standards, vendor payments will not be made.

You should make a referral to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) for an investigation of the living situation, if applicable.

Voluntary vendor payments:

1. enter the requested vendor payment on the Vendor Payments page. Make sure you select the correct vendor payment amount and type.

Note	If the vendor payment type is electricity, gas, heat or mortgage the account number field must be completed on the Vendor Payments page
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2. wrap up the case
3. go to the Verification tab (See [Verification Checklist](#)).
4. you will see Vendor Payments on the list of verifications. The Value here is Payment type
5. click the Print Button. The Print Documents page will appear
6. select Local for the Print Destination
7. click the Generate button
8. click the Print button to print the Verifications Checklist and hand it to the client

Note	If the vendor payment is for rent, the client must obtain a copy of a recent health and safety inspection report or a written statement from the local board of health that the apartment or home passes inspection
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When the client submits the agreement signed by the vendor, process the signed agreement following procedures described in [Requesting a New SSPS Invoice](#).

Important	A hard edit will ensure that vendor payments will not be authorized unless the same amount or greater is deducted from the client's grant. To avoid the hard edit, enter or update the amount in the Vendor Payments page, then perform an Interview Wrapup, before creating the matching invoice.
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9. annotate the Narrative tab stating the type(s) and amounts of vendor payment(s) requested. For example, "Client requesting voluntary payments be made for rent, \$130 per month to Winn Residential, and electricity, \$75 per month to NStar. VC-1 sent."

Upon approval, both the client and vendor will receive a notice.

A vendor payment for fuel or utilities must be made in the amount of the monthly cost of the fuel or utility averaged over a 12-month period, as determined by the client's arrangement with the fuel or utility company.

Important	For all protective payments, selecting the correct dates of First Service and Last Service in the invoice is critical. You will be selecting multiple consecutive months to pay a vendor. For Last Service, you must select
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	the last day of the final consecutive month of protective payments. This will ensure that clients have their payments authorized every month. You will also have to release each protective payment every month the payment is authorized. See (Processing Vendor Payments).
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Notification of vendor payment status

When you start, stop, increase or decrease vendor payments on the Vendor Payments Page , you must also start, stop, increase or decrease the corresponding SSPS invoice payment.

The client and vendor will receive a *Vendor Payment Approval Letter* if the client has been put on vendor payments for rent and/or utilities. If vendor payments are discontinued, the client and vendor will receive a *Vendor Payment Removal Letter*. One-month advance notice must be given to the vendor(s) before terminating a vendor payment(s), except if:

- the client has verified, by the Board of Health or appropriate code enforcement authority, the existence of a health and/or safety code violation, or
- the client's cash assistance is terminated, or
- the client's monthly grant amount is less than the amount of a vendor payment(s), or
- the client has verified that the last month's rent was paid as part of a lease agreement, or
- the client is participating in the Full Employment Program, or
- the TAO director or designee has waived the one-month advance requirement

For the exceptions described above, the vendor(s) must receive the letter(s) no later than the date the vendor payment(s) is terminated.

If the amount of the payment changes, the client will receive a notice that their grant amount has changed, but the vendor will not receive a notice.

Terminations due to Batch Jobs

Vendor payroll batch jobs are run on the Friday before the first Wednesday of each month. On the next business day after that Friday, you must check the Failed Payroll Invoices View to see if any vendor payments for their clients failed to be processed. To go to this view:

1. go to the My Office tab
2. select Views
3. select Special Services Payment
4. select Failed Payroll Invoices
5. select the Invoice by clicking the appropriate check box
6. select the Invoice icon

On the Invoice, you will see the Payroll Exception Event. There will be text in the Comments field describing the reason for the failure. You must investigate the reason to determine your course of action.

If there is a correction to be made to the case record that is not an SSPS reason, then address that issue. If there are no such reasons, then you may update the Invoice to reduce the vendor payment, if appropriate. There will be no letter to notify the vendor of the change.

If, after your investigation, the client's cash benefits were reduced correctly, (by a batch job) and there is not enough money for the vendor payment, you must terminate the Invoice. Use the Event-Terminate P.P. (Protective Payment) page, which is selected from the Invoice page of the Invoice of the failed payment. Terminating the Invoice will generate a Termination letter for the vendor.

[Immediate Needs](#)

[SSPS Overview](#)

[Vendor Payments Page](#)

[Vendor Payments Policy and Procedures](#)

Last Update: November 1, 2024

Vendor Payments Page - Protective Payments

Use the Vendor Payments page, located in the Assessed Person Income and Expenses workflow, to establish voluntary vendor payments. A vendor payment is a portion of the client's cash grant that is deducted and paid to a third party on the client's behalf for a current or past household expense. A vendor payment will go to a gas, electric or oil company, or a landlord or mortgage holder.

The following are available for selection on the Vendor Payments page Payment tab: Electricity, Gas, Heat, Mortgage and Rent. Other expense types on the Vendor Payments page relative to Young Parent Living Program (YPLP) fees are not currently being used.

How to add a new vendor payment

To start a new vendor payment, on the Vendor Payments page Payments tab:

1. select a payment type from the Type field drop-down list on the Payments tab
2. enter the client's service account number if the payment type selection is electricity, gas, heat or mortgage

Note	The account number field is mandatory for completion when the above payment type selections are made. You will receive a pop-up and not be able to proceed if the field is not completed.
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3. enter an amount to be paid in the Amount field

Note	Do not add a decimal point for whole dollar amounts, for example \$40. A decimal point will automatically be added and it will show as \$40.00. Manually enter a decimal point when entering an amount that is not a whole dollar amount, for example, \$40 + decimal point + 50 would capture the correct amount of \$40.50.
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4. click the Deduct from icon. A popup opens with a list of active and pending cases where the client is the grantee

Note	If there is the only one active or pending cash case, the Deduct from field defaults to that case.
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5. select the active or pending TAFDC or EAEDC case. TAFDC or EAEDC and the client's SSN will display in the Deduct from field
6. click Save. The vendor payment record will display in the select list box above the Payments tab
7. To add another new vendor payment record, click Clear and repeat steps 1 through 7

8. click Finish to save your entries and exit the Vendor Payments page; and
9. go to the Interview Wrapup page to authorize the Vendor Payment transaction

Once you have saved the vendor payment record, the Type and Deduct from fields are disabled and cannot be changed. You must delete the entire record to correct these fields, if entered incorrectly.

Important	When starting vendor payments on the Vendor Payments page, you must also take the appropriate action to pay the vendor through SSPS. For all protective payments, selecting the correct dates of First Service and Last Service in the invoice is critical. You will be selecting multiple consecutive months to pay a vendor. For Last Service, you must select the last day of the final consecutive month of protective payments. This will ensure that clients have their payments authorized every month. For example; if the protective payments are being paid for January through June, the First Date of Service would be 1/1/20xx and the last Date of Service would be 6/30/20xx. You will also have to release each protective payment every month the payment is authorized after the first month. See Processing Vendor Payments .
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How to delete an existing vendor payment

1. To delete a vendor payment, on the Vendor Payments page Payments tab:
2. select the appropriate vendor payment record from the select list
3. click the Delete button on the right side of the page. A Confirm delete popup page opens
4. click Yes on the Confirm delete popup page. The following message appears: "Delete was successful". Click OK
5. click Finish, and
6. go to the Interview Wrapup page to authorize the Vendor Payment transaction

How to update an existing vendor payment

To update a vendor payment, on the Vendor Payments page Payments tab:

1. select the appropriate vendor payment record from the select list
2. enter the revised amount to be paid in the Amount field
3. enter an updated account number if needed
4. click Save
5. click Next or Finish; and
6. go to the Interview Wrapup page to authorize the Vendor Payment transaction

How to end an existing vendor payment record

To end a vendor payment, on the Vendor Payments page Payments tab:

1. select the appropriate vendor payment record from the select list
2. click End button on the right side of the page to end the existing record
3. click the Save button, and
4. go to the Interview Wrapup page to authorize the Vendor Payment transaction

A notice will automatically be sent to the client and vendor when these payments start. Only the client will receive a notice if the payments stop. If the amount of the payment changes, the client will receive a notice that their grant amount has changed, but the vendor will not receive a notice.

Important	When increasing or decreasing vendor payments on the Vendor Payments page, you must also take the appropriate action to adjust the payment through SSPS. See Processing Vendor Payments , Authorizing/Continuing Protective Payments. If vendor payments are being stopped, you must cancel the invoice. See Invoice Cancellations – Case Managers, Central Burial Unit (CBU) and Central Invoice Approval Unit (CIAU) .
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[Vendor Payments Policy and Procedures](#)

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